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DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL STATISTICS: DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND MIGRATION STATISTICS

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report contains information on the activities carried out by the United Nations Secretariat under the demographic and social statistics programme during the period 1995-1996. The subjects covered are civil registration and vital statistics (paras. 2-6), human settlements and city statistics (paras. 7-12), crime and criminal justice statistics (para. 13), impairment, disability and handicap statistics (paras. 14-18) and gender statistics (paras. 19-24). Information on migration statistics will be issued in an addendum to this report.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report was requested by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-eighth session.[1] Issues covered include civil registration and vital statistics; human settlements and city statistics; crime and criminal justice statistics; impairment, disability and handicap (IDH) statistics; and gender statistics. Work on migration statistics - specifically a discussion of the revision of the recommendations on international migration statistics - is described in an addendum to this report.

I. CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS

2. At its twenty-eighth session, the Statistical Commission "endorsed the continued implementation of the International Programme for Accelerating the Improvement of Vital Statistics and Civil Registration Systems, particularly training workshops on civil registration and vital statistics, and efforts aimed at the economies in transition".[2]

3. The United Nations Statistics Division, in cooperation with the Population Division, completed a review of topics related to fertility and mortality estimation covered in national population censuses from 1985 to 1994. This review was used as a basis for revising the population census topics, fertility and mortality, contained in the "Principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses, Revision 1".[3]

4. The fifth workshop in a series on Strategies for Accelerating the Improvement of Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems was held at Rabat from 4 to 8 December 1995. It was organized by the Statistics Division and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and hosted by the Government of Morocco. Twelve French-speaking African countries participated. Technical contributions to the workshop were provided by participants from developed countries, ECA, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and members of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Country Support Teams. The report of the Workshop, entitled "Rapport de l'atelier africain sur les stratégies visant à accélérer l'amélioration des systèmes d'établissement des statistiques de l'état civil et d'enregistrement des faits d'état civil" was disseminated jointly by the Statistics Division and ECA. Reports on civil registration and vital statistics systems for each participating country are available in French, both in hard copy and electronic versions.

5. Four reports to provide technical guidance to countries on civil registration and vital statistics are being prepared with the support of UNFPA: "Manual for the management, operation and maintenance of civil registration systems"; "Manual on developing information, education and communication programmes for effective civil registration systems"; "Manual on how to prepare a legal framework for civil registration and vital statistics systems"; and "Manual for computerization of civil registration and statistic systems". The review, technical editing and publication of these manuals are scheduled for this year.

6. Short-term missions involving participation in national training programmes (Colombia, 1995; Brazil, 1996) and a review of country follow-up to a 1991 training workshop (Argentina, 1996; Chile, 1996) have been carried out. Pending the approval of extrabudgetary funds, two workshops and one short-term training course are planned for the period 1997-1999 to improve vital statistics and civil registration systems in the least developed countries of Asia and Africa.

II. SOCIAL STATISTICS

A. Human settlements and city statistics

7. At its twenty-eighth session, the Statistical Commission "endorsed the joint Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat/United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) work leading to the publication of the Compendium of Human Settlement Statistics in time for the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in June 1996".[4] It also encouraged the further development of a human settlements statistics database and its speedier availability on the Internet and on compact disk read-only memory (CD-ROM).[4]

8. The Statistics Division and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) prepared the Compendium of Human Settlements Statistics 1995.[5] The Compendium provided human settlements statistics for 243 countries or areas and 338 cities in five general areas: population, land use, housing, infrastructure and services, and crime. It provided global statistical information for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul from 3 to 14 June 1996.

9. The Statistics Division collaborated with the Centre in the production of additional outputs for the Conference. Two sets of wall charts on human settlements conditions,[6] were published. One set presented population and housing topics for countries and the other set for cities. In addition, statistics prepared by the Division were used as a principal source for the preparation of the statistical annex of the publication An Urbanizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 1996,[7] a major document of the Conference.

10. The computerized Statistical Database on Housing and Human Settlements (DATAHOUSE) has been made available to users through the Internet. In cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), procedures have been developed so that DATAHOUSE can be accessed and downloaded, depending on the user's needs.

11. The development of a CD-ROM containing human settlements statistics is being discussed as a joint activity with the Centre.

12. Human settlement statistics are also covered in "Principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses, Revision 1".[3]

B. Crime and criminal justice statistics

13. The Statistics Division assisted the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna in the Fifth United Nations Survey of Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems, launched in 1995. The Division provided the draft design of the questionnaires and administered their collection. The continuation of these activities by the Division is subject to the availability of resources.

C. Impairment, disability and handicap statistics

14. At its twenty-eighth session, the Statistical Commission "requested that the concept of functional limitations be further elaborated upon in the development of IDH statistics".[8] With respect to this recommendation, disability was included for the first time as a topic in the "Principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses, Revision 1".[3] A functional limitation approach rather than an impairment approach was recommended.

15. The Commission also requested the Statistics Division "to prepare a minimum set of IDH tabulation items and core tables".[8] Further to this request, a core set of tables that should be produced with census data on prevalence of disability by gender, age and urban and rural residence were included in "Principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses, Revision 1".[3]

16. The minimum set of indicators related to disability will also be a part of the new version of the United Nations Disability Statistics Database (Distat). Indicators are being prepared on prevalence of disability and living conditions as a first step in the development of Distat. These indicators will be put on the Internet early in 1997.

17. The Manual for the Development of Statistical Information for Disability Programmes and Policies[9] was published in 1995. The Manual was prepared in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and supported by the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). It was written specifically for programme managers producing and using statistical information to implement, monitor and evaluate disability policies and programmes. It defines key terms and concepts in the field and describes methods for obtaining and using the relevant statistical information. In view of the potential interest of the Manual for a wide, non-technical set of users, special attention was placed on its promotion and dissemination. Sales to date have been strong, with bulk purchases by a number of international organizations for use in their field offices as well as at headquarters, and by Governments, universities and non-governmental organizations.

18. The "Handbook on census and survey methods for development of impairment, disability and handicap statistics" is being revised based on the review carried out by the United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the Development of Impairment, Disability and Handicap Statistics (Voorburg, the Netherlands, November 1994) and will be published later this year. This technical handbook is directed to statistical offices and research organizations working on IDH statistics. It

will provide guidelines on the collection of IDH statistics in censuses and surveys and on the dissemination and analysis of these statistics for policy purposes. Statistics Netherlands and SIDA are contributing support for preparation of the handbook.

D. Gender statistics

19. At its twenty-eighty session, the Commission welcomed the work of the Statistics Division on gender statistics, including the progress made in the preparation of the second edition of The World's Women: Trends and Statistics for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995) and noted the value of that work for national work as well.[10]

20. Statistics had an important role at the Conference. First, the World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics[11] was one of the official Conference documents. It was prepared by the Statistics Division and was a collaborative effort of 11 United Nations programmes. Secondly, greater use was made of official statistics in reports prepared for the Conference by international agencies and research institutes, as noted in The New York Times.[12] Thirdly, a priority objective of the Platform for Action adopted by the Conference was to "generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation".[13]

21. Follow-up work continues on the dissemination and promotion of The World's Women 1995. In addition, the Handbook for Producing National Statistical Reports on Women and Men has been finalized and will be published early in 1997. This manual is for national use in compiling and organizing statistics on gender issues, in presenting tables and charts and in writing up quantitative analyses. A preliminary version was presented at a special panel, "Gender Statistics: A Policy Tool", at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Preparation of the Handbook was supported by a project of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy, a coordinating body comprising the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNFPA, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Draft materials from the Handbook were used in the provision of technical support to countries (Kenya and Mexico) and to the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in the development of national gender statistics publications and programmes as well as in collaborative work with other agencies and institutions to develop training materials.

22. At its twenty-eighth session, the Statistical Commission "emphasized the value of time-use statistics for a range of national and international socio-economic statistics, including gender statistics, and requested that a draft classification of time-use activities be prepared by the Statistical Division as a basis for further research and special studies".[14] Through a project with UNDP, work is now under way to develop this classification of activities for time-use. Depending on the availability of funds, the classification will be reviewed at an expert group meeting to be convened in September 1997.

23. The Statistical Commission also "encouraged the further development of demographic, social and human settlement statistics databases and their speedier availability on the Internet and on CD-ROM"[15] and "the use of the analytical, user-oriented approach found in The World's Women 1970-1990: Trends and Statistics in other social fields".[14] With respect to these recommendations, the general strategy in work on the compilation of social statistics is to broaden the existing Women's Indicators and Statistics Database (Wistat) to cover additional areas of social concern following the recommendations in the programmes of action adopted by the recent major international conferences, building on the recommendations of the Expert Group on the Statistical Implications of Recent Major United Nations Conferences and the United Nations Common Data Systems Task Force. This work is being supported by UNFPA and UNDP. The specific outputs prepared and planned are:

(a) A trial minimum set of social indicators covering a wide range of subject-matter fields is available on the Internet. These indicators consist mainly of the indicators proposed in the minimum national social data set (MNSDS) for follow-up and monitoring implementation of the recommendations of recent United Nations conferences on children, population and development, social development and women (see E/CN.3/1997/16 and E/CN.3/AC.1/1994/R.4);

(b) The statistical tables from The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics are also available on the Internet. These tables can be viewed on the screen and, if desired, printed or downloaded to a file for further processing by the user. The tables will be updated as updates are entered in Wistat pending provision of extrabudgetary support;

(c) A single, integrated international database containing extensive basic statistics and indicators covering a wide range of topics in these fields is being developed for wide dissemination pending the provision of extrabudgetary support. This new database is being developed in close coordination with the United Nations Economic and Social Information System (UNESIS) project leader. The database will expand on the existing Wistat database. Updating of this database has started. Concurrently, additional topics and indicators are being identified, and data sources and available statistics evaluated, for feasibility of inclusion in the database.

24. Recommendations for gender statistics were prepared for inclusion in "Principles and recommendations for population and housing censuses, Revision 1",[3] covering economic activity, households and family and more general gender issues.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 8 (E/1995/28), para. 2.

[2] Ibid., para. 52.

[3] PROVISIONAL ST/ESA/STAT/SER.M/67/Rev.1.

[4] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 8 (E/1995/28), para. 52.

[5] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.11.

[6] United Nations publication, No. HS/386/95E.

[7] Oxford and New York; published by Oxford University Press for the United Nations Centre on Human Settlements (Habitat), 1996.

[8] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 8 (E/1995/28), para. 61.

[9] Statistics on Special Population Groups, Series Y, No. 8, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.XVII.4.

[10] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 8 (E/1995/28), para. 58.

[11] Social Statistics and Indicators, Series K, No. 12, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XVII.2.

[12] Barbara Crossette, "Study finds worldwide decline in elections of women to office", The New York Times (27 August 1995).

[13] Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II, paras. 206-209.

[14] Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 8 (E/1995/28), para. 58.

[15] Ibid., para. 52.